

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A filter element for a filter, said filter element comprising a first end disk, a second end disk, a filter medium extending between said first and second end disks, and a return line which is arranged between the first and second end disks and which opens into an outlet opening on the outside of the filter element.

2. A filter element according to claim 1, wherein at least one outlet opening has a diameter of about 0.2 mm to 0.5 mm.

3. A filter element according to claim 1, wherein one end disk has a first filter sealing area, which is directed exteriorly of the filter element, and a second filter sealing area, which is directed interiorly of the filter element, and wherein the outlet opening of said one end disk is situated between the first filter sealing area and the second filter sealing area.

4. A filter element according to claim 1, wherein the return line is an integral part of an injection molded filter element carrier.

5. A filter element according to claim 1, wherein the return line is a line section, which leads to the outlet openings in the end disks.

6. A filter housing for receiving a filter element comprising first and second end disks, a filter medium extending between said first and second end disks, and a return line which is arranged between the first and second end disks and which opens into an outlet opening on the outside of the filter element, said filter housing having:

- a first liquid connection which opens in a guide tube above a bottom area of the filter housing,

- a second liquid connection which opens in the bottom area of the filter housing, and
- first and second housing sealing areas situated between the first liquid connection and the second liquid connection.

7. A filter comprising, in combination, a filter housing according to claim 6 and a filter element comprising first and second end disks, a filter medium extending between said first and second end disks, and a return line which is arranged between the first and second end disks and which opens into an outlet opening on the outside of the filter element, wherein a first filter sealing area on said filter element sealingly engages the first housing sealing area, and a second filter sealing area on said filter element sealingly engages the second housing sealing area.

8. In an internal combustion engine, the improvement comprising a fuel filter according to claim 7.

9. In a motor vehicle having an internal combustion engine, the improvement comprising a fuel filter according to claim 7, wherein one of the liquid connections of the filter housing is connected to a fuel line of a fuel tank, and the other liquid connection of the filter housing is connected to a fuel return line leading to the fuel tank.